



DEPARTMENT OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION &  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

# 2022-2032

## MISSOURI MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS REPORT

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# MIDDLE-SKILLS OVERVIEW

Middle-skill occupations are an essential part of Missouri's workforce, accounting for more than one-third of all jobs. These critical occupations are broadly defined as occupations that require some training after high school but less than a bachelor's degree. Low-skilled jobs are those that require, at most, a high school education, while high-skill jobs require at least a bachelor's degree.

There is always a need for a properly skilled workforce, and a lack of skilled workers impacts the ability of businesses and industries to compete globally. Lacking relevant skills hinders the ability to be more productive, thus deterring higher earning potential and improved living standards. Middle-skill workers are pivotal to maintaining and improving society and the U.S. economy. These workers are vital in health care, public services, construction, manufacturing, and information technology infrastructure development.<sup>1</sup>

Meeting the continued demand for middle-skill occupations is an important factor in maintaining a strong economy in the state. Middle-skill jobs offer good pay and career opportunities with industry-recognized training and credentials. Such training programs can be as short as a few months. Middle-skill jobs offer an important opportunity for better pay and advancement without needing a bachelor's degree. This report highlights Missouri's middle-skill jobs and provides details on several occupational groups where middle-skilled workers are in high demand.

<sup>1</sup>Mabel, Z. et al., "Missed Opportunities Credential Shortages in Programs Aligned with High-Paying Middle-Skills Jobs in 55 US Metro Areas", Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, 2024, accessed April 2025

MIDDLE-SKILL OCCUPATIONS ACCOUNT FOR  
MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF JOBS IN MISSOURI.



# MISSOURI'S MIDDLE-SKILL OCCUPATIONS

In 2023, middle-skill occupations had an average annual wage of \$53,603. This was lower than the average annual wage of \$57,580 for all occupations in the state, but higher than the average annual wage of \$36,925 for low-skill occupations.

Over 1.1 million jobs in Missouri's labor market were in middle-skill occupations. In 2022, 35.6 percent of the workforce was employed in middle-skill occupations, compared to 35.5 percent employed in low-skill occupations and 28.9 percent employed in high-skill occupations.

The middle-skill occupation with the highest individual employment was *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers* (51,366), followed by *Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators* (32,935) and *Maintenance and Repair Workers, General* (32,437). These three occupations combined employed over 116,000 workers in Missouri in 2022.

Middle-skill occupations are projected to produce over 117,000 annual job openings from 2022 to 2032, or 33 percent of all job openings during that period. High-skill occupations are projected to produce 20.6 percent of all job openings and low-skill occupations are projected to produce 46.4 percent of all job openings.

Total job openings are a combination of growth, exit, and transfer openings:

- Growth openings are the result of an occupation growing between the base year and the projected year.
- Exit openings occur when a worker leaves the workforce entirely, such as retirement.
- Transfer openings occur when a worker leaves their occupation for a different one.

Four occupation groups have particularly high concentrations of middle-skill employment:

- *Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations*
- *Production Occupations*
- *Construction and Extraction Occupations*
- *Protective Service Occupations*

## MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS



**1,117,114**  
EMPLOYMENT



**117,824**  
ANNUAL JOB  
OPENINGS



**\$53,603**  
AVERAGE 2023  
WAGE



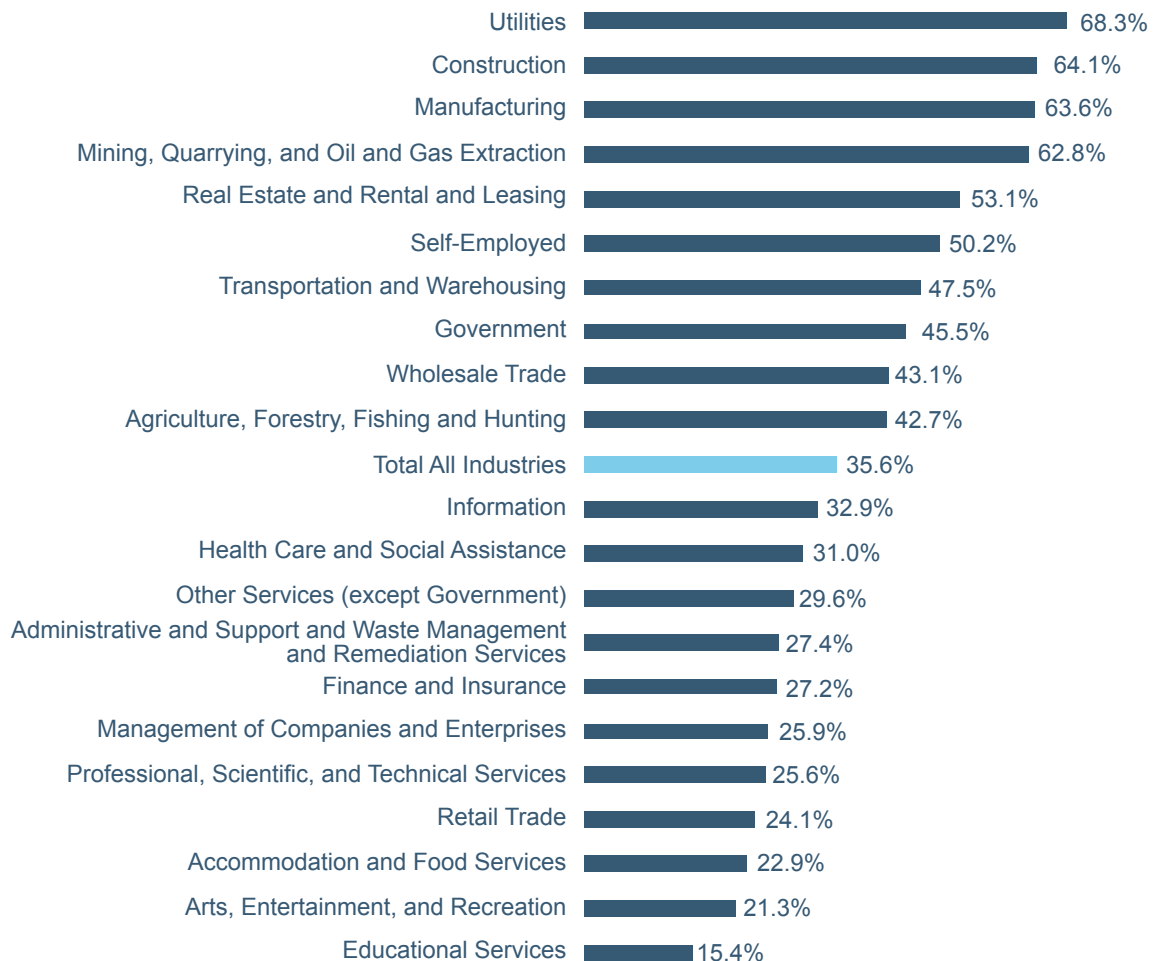
**35.6%**  
OF MISSOURI  
WORKFORCE



# MISSOURI'S MIDDLE-SKILL OCCUPATIONS BY INDUSTRY

Overall, middle-skill occupations made up 35.6 percent of total employment in Missouri. Some industries, however, had a much higher percentage of middle-skill employment. The *Utilities* industry had the highest percentage of middle-skill employment, followed by the *Construction* industry.

## Middle-Skill Employment Percent of Industry 2022



## TOTAL MIDDLE-SKILL EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY



179,598

MANUFACTURING



141,758

HEALTH CARE AND  
SOCIAL ASSISTANCE



91,226

GOVERNMENT



88,972

CONSTRUCTION

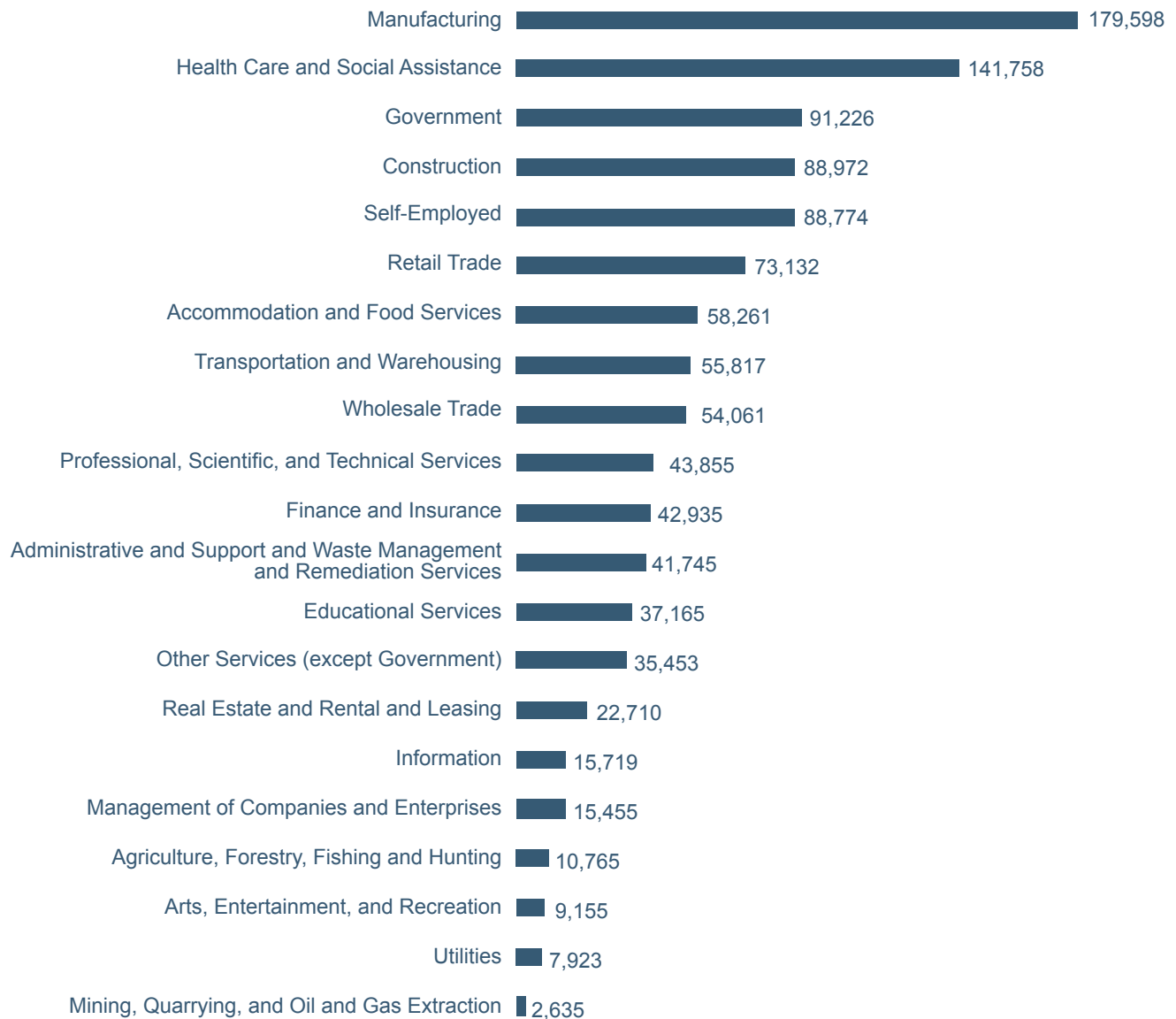


88,774

SELF-EMPLOYED

The *Manufacturing* industry had the highest total number of middle-skill employees, followed by the *Health Care and Social Assistance* sector. Government had the third highest employment. The *Utilities* industry had the highest percentage of middle-skill employment, but the lowest middle-skill employment in absolute numbers after the *Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction* industry.

### Top Middle-Skill Employment by Industry 2022



# TOP MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS BY OPENINGS, GROWTH, & WAGES

The middle-skill occupations with the most annual job openings during the projection period are *Cooks, Restaurant*; *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers*; and *Nursing Assistants*. These three occupations combined are projected to have over 16,000 job openings per year through 2032. *Cooks, Restaurant* are also projected to have high growth between 2022 and 2032.

## Top Middle-Skill Occupations by Annual Openings 2022-2032

Occupations	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Net Change	Annual Total Openings	2023 Average Wage
Cooks, Restaurant	31,981	39,312	7,331	<b>6,070</b>	\$34,000
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	51,366	53,729	2,363	<b>5,693</b>	\$53,440
Nursing Assistants	30,420	32,489	2,069	<b>4,660</b>	\$36,350
First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers	22,151	23,779	1,628	<b>3,518</b>	\$39,460
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	32,437	34,812	2,375	<b>3,254</b>	\$48,080
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	32,935	30,041	-2,894	<b>3,037</b>	\$44,240
Bookkeeping, Accounting, and Auditing Clerks	22,861	22,048	-813	<b>2,519</b>	\$46,990
Teaching Assistants, Except Postsecondary	19,295	19,674	379	<b>2,301</b>	\$34,550
First-Line Supervisors of Office and Administrative Support Workers	23,484	22,797	-687	<b>2,139</b>	\$65,150
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	22,250	21,310	-940	<b>2,040</b>	\$49,020

The middle-skill occupations that are projected to experience the fastest rates of growth are *Physical Therapist Assistants*, *Occupational Therapy Assistants*, and *Veterinary Technologists and Technicians*. Each of these three occupations have projected growth rates of over 25 percent, compared to a 4.3 percent growth for all occupations in Missouri. *Cooks, Restaurant* has the highest employment of the top 10 fastest growing occupations.

## Middle-Skill Fastest Growing Occupations 2022-2032

Occupations	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Net Change	Percent Change	2023 Average Wage
Physical Therapist Assistants	2,517	3,243	726	<b>28.8%</b>	\$62,750
Occupational Therapy Assistants	1,159	1,492	333	<b>28.7%</b>	\$61,290
Veterinary Technologists and Technicians	2,078	2,638	560	<b>26.9%</b>	\$38,600
Cooks, Restaurant	31,981	39,312	7,331	<b>22.9%</b>	\$34,000
Respiratory Therapists	3,110	3,738	628	<b>20.2%</b>	\$70,450
Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Programmers	456	548	92	<b>20.2%</b>	\$63,910
Health Information Technologists and Medical Registrars	1,462	1,749	287	<b>19.6%</b>	\$50,350
Hearing Aid Specialists	311	371	60	<b>19.3%</b>	\$56,830
Animal Trainers	863	1,017	154	<b>17.8%</b>	\$48,550
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	1,301	1,532	231	<b>17.8%</b>	\$85,910

While the average annual wage for all middle-skill occupations was \$53,603 in 2023, some middle-skill occupations earn considerably more. The middle-skill occupation with the highest average annual wage is *Commercial Pilots*, followed by *Air Traffic Controllers*. Although these occupations have higher than average wages, they do not make up a large portion of Missouri's total and projected employment.

### Top Middle-Skill Occupations by Average Wage

Occupations	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Net Change	Annual Total Openings	2023 Average Wage
Commercial Pilots	1,122	1,187	65	135	<b>\$128,830</b>
Air Traffic Controllers	248	271	23	24	<b>\$112,360</b>
Power Distributors and Dispatchers	97	98	1	8	<b>\$108,180</b>
Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers	2,444	2,636	192	218	<b>\$98,630</b>
Electrical and Electronics Repairers, Powerhouse, Substation, and Relay	442	435	-7	36	<b>\$94,650</b>
First-Line Supervisors of Non-Retail Sales Workers	5,609	5,542	-67	442	<b>\$92,940</b>
Petroleum Pump System Operators, Refinery Operators, and Gaugers	930	935	5	85	<b>\$92,680</b>
Fire Inspectors and Investigators	196	207	11	18	<b>\$90,970</b>
Nuclear Technicians	157	160	3	16	<b>\$89,090</b>
Postmasters and Mail Superintendents	289	272	-17	19	<b>\$88,900</b>



# MIDDLE-SKILL EMPLOYMENT BY MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP

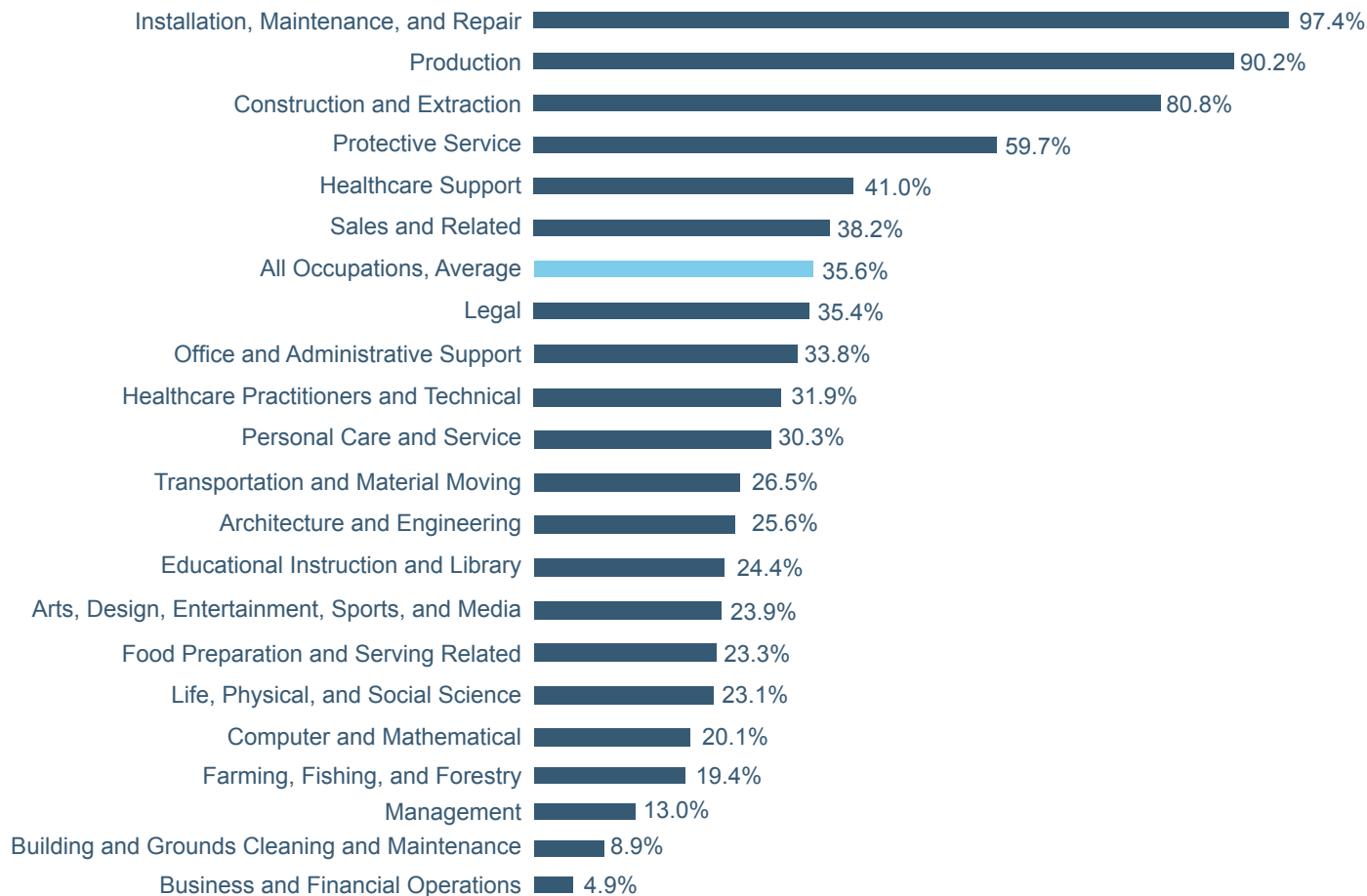
All but one of the 22 major occupation groups have middle-skill jobs. The *Installation, Maintenance and Repair* occupation group has the highest percentage of middle-skill employment, followed by *Production*.

## Occupation Groups With Above Average Percent of Middle-Skill Jobs



Six major occupation groups have higher middle-skill employment percentages than the state average of 35.6 percent for all occupations. Some occupation groups with above average middle-skill employment percentages, such as *Healthcare Support* and *Production*, are heavily concentrated in certain industries, such as the *Health Care and Social Assistance* industry and *Manufacturing* industry, respectively. Two of the exceptions include *Installation, Maintenance, and Repair* and *Office and Administrative Support* occupations, which are more evenly distributed among a variety of industries.

## Middle-Skill Employment by Major Occupation Group



# INSTALLATION, MAINTENANCE, AND REPAIR OCCUPATIONS

The *Installation, Maintenance, and Repair* major occupation group has over 97 percent of its employment in middle-skill occupations. The three occupations with the most projected total openings in this group are *Maintenance and Repair Workers, General*; *Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics*; and *First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers*. These three occupations combined are projected to have over 5,900 total job openings each year through 2032.

## Top Middle-Skill Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations by Annual Openings

Occupations	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Annual Openings		2023 Average Wage
			Difference	Total	
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	32,437	34,812	238	3,254	\$48,080
Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics	20,367	20,855	49	1,784	\$47,380
First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers	9,961	10,395	43	877	\$74,900
Heating, Air Conditioning, and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	9,332	9,950	62	862	\$62,530
Bus and Truck Mechanics and Diesel Engine Specialists	7,626	7,734	11	642	\$56,560
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	5,919	6,873	95	587	\$58,880
Telecommunications Equipment Installers and Repairers, Except Line Installers	4,353	4,453	10	451	\$61,280
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Workers, All Other	3,711	3,810	10	363	\$50,550
Automotive Body and Related Repairers	3,952	3,985	3	342	\$53,910
Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines	3,486	3,739	25	321	\$60,640

Skill requirements for occupations can be divided into *common skills* and *specialized skills*. Common skills are applicable across many different industries and occupations and are also known as “soft” skills. The top common skills for *Installation, Maintenance and Repair* occupations include *Troubleshooting* and *Communications*. Specialized skills are more specific to an occupation and are also known as “technical” or “hard” skills. The top specialized skills for *Installation, Maintenance and Repair* occupations include *HVAC* and *Plumbing*.

Certifications can be useful when pursuing an *Installation, Maintenance and Repair* occupation. Some certifications, such as an *Automotive Service Excellence Certification*, are more specialized to a narrow range of jobs, while other certifications, such as a *commercial driver’s license*, are generally applicable to a variety of jobs.

## Top Skills

### Top Common Skills

Troubleshooting (Problem Solving)

Communications

Customer Service

Management

Operations

### Top Specialized Skills

HVAC

Plumbing

Preventive Maintenance

Hand Tools

Machinery

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## Top Certifications

Valid Driver’s License

Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Certification

Commercial Driver’s License (CDL)

HVAC Certification

EPA 608 Technician Certification

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# MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP

# PRODUCTION OCCUPATIONS

Over 90 percent of *Production* jobs are middle-skilled. The three middle-skill *Production* occupations with the most projected annual openings are *Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators*; *First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers*; and *Production Workers All Other*. These three occupations combined are projected to have more than 5,300 total openings in Missouri each year through 2032.

## Top Middle-Skill Production Occupations by Total Openings

Occupations	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Annual Openings		2023 Average Wage
			Difference	Total	
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators	32,935	30,041	-289	<b>3,037</b>	\$44,240
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	12,638	12,966	33	<b>1,217</b>	\$67,880
Production Workers, All Other	9,395	10,286	89	<b>1,143</b>	\$42,120
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, and Weighers	10,021	9,946	-8	<b>1,131</b>	\$50,740
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	10,316	10,450	13	<b>1,016</b>	\$49,820
Electrical, Electronic, and Electromechanical Assemblers, Except Coil Winders, Tapers, and Finishers	7,554	8,104	55	<b>880</b>	\$41,580
Packaging and Filling Machine Operators and Tenders	7,571	7,904	33	<b>858</b>	\$43,070
Bakers	4,137	4,325	19	<b>636</b>	\$33,250
Machinists	5,755	6,018	26	<b>596</b>	\$53,160
Food Batchmakers	3,597	3,856	26	<b>579</b>	\$44,160

The *Production* occupation group is closely linked to the *Manufacturing* industry, with almost three-fourths of *Production* jobs being found in the *Manufacturing* industry.

Skill requirements for occupations can be divided into *common skills* and *specialized skills*. Common skills are applicable across many different industries and occupations and are also known as “soft” skills. The top common skills for *Production* occupations include *Communications* and *Operations*. Specialized skills are more specific to an occupation and are also known as “technical” or “hard” skills. The top specialized skills for *Production* occupations include *Machinery* and *Hand Tools*.

Some of the top qualifications in the *Production* occupation group are specific to certain occupations, such as *Forklift Certifications*, while others are more applicable to a variety of occupations, such as *Commercial Driver’s License*.

## Top Skills

Top Common Skills	Top Specialized Skills
Communications	Machinery
Operations	Hand Tools
Detail Oriented	Machine Operation
Management	General Mathematics
Lifting Ability	Housekeeping

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## Top Certifications

Valid Driver’s License
Forklift Certification
Security Clearance
Food Handler’s Card
Commercial Driver’s License (CDL)

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# MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP

# CONSTRUCTION & EXTRACTION

Four out of five *Construction and Extraction* jobs are middle-skilled. The top three middle-skill *Construction and Extraction* occupations with the most projected annual openings are *Carpenters*; *Electricians*; and *First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers*. These three occupations combined are projected to have over 4,100 annual job openings through 2032.

## Top Middle-Skill Construction and Extraction Occupations by Annual Openings

Occupations	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Annual Openings		2023 Mean Wages
			Difference	Total	
Carpenters	20,471	21,623	115	1,839	\$62,810
Electricians	13,024	14,074	105	1,285	\$67,850
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	11,609	12,225	62	999	\$80,900
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	9,282	9,873	59	859	\$66,670
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	9,155	9,494	34	828	\$69,730
Painters, Construction and Maintenance	7,484	7,738	25	608	\$57,570
Highway Maintenance Workers	4,942	5,231	29	483	\$42,180
Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers	5,299	5,185	-11	380	\$61,670
Sheet Metal Workers	3,991	4,081	9	375	\$69,610
Construction and Building Inspectors	1,814	1,789	-2	201	\$61,660

Skill requirements for occupations can be divided into *common skills* and *specialized skills*. Common skills are applicable across many different industries and occupations and are also known as “soft” skills. The top common skills for *Construction and Extraction* occupations include *Communications* and *Customer Service*. Specialized skills are more specific to an occupation and are also known as “technical” or “hard” skills. The top specialized skills for *Construction and Extraction* occupations include *Construction*, *Power Tool Operation*, and *Hand Tools*.

Top Skills	
Top Common Skills	Top Specialized Skills
Communications	Construction
Customer Service	Power Tool Operation
Lifting Ability	Hand Tools
Detail Oriented	Carpentry
Operations	Painting

Top Certifications
Valid Driver's License
Commercial Driver's License (CDL)
10-Hour OSHA General Industry Card
CDL Class A License
30-Hour OSHA General Industry Card

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Many occupations that typically require apprenticeship programs are *Construction* occupations. Of the top 10 middle-skill *Construction* occupations with the most total openings, four typically require Registered Apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeships offer employees the opportunity to earn money and receive on-the-job training while working toward a nationally recognized credential.

Apprenticeship Occupations		
Occupation	2023 Average Wage	Annual Total Openings
Carpenters	\$62,810	1,839
Electricians	\$67,850	1,285
Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters	\$69,730	828
Sheet Metal Workers	\$69,610	375
Brickmasons and Blockmasons	\$67,550	186
Millwrights	\$62,220	101
Structural Iron and Steel Workers	\$62,030	100
Glaziers	\$55,790	95
Insulation Workers, Mechanical	\$62,840	51
Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers	n/a	21
Musical Instrument Repairers and Tuners	\$36,530	18
Boilermakers	\$57,210	n/a
Stonemasons	\$56,470	n/a
Elevator and Escalator Installers and Repairers	n/a	n/a

# MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP

## PROTECTIVE SERVICE OCCUPATIONS

About six out of 10 *Protective Service* jobs are middle-skilled. The top three middle-skill *Protective Service* occupations with the most annual total openings are *Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers*, *Firefighters*, and *Correctional Officers and Jailers*. These three occupations combined are projected to have more than 1,900 annual job openings through 2032.

### Top Middle-Skill Protective Service Occupations by Annual Openings

Occupations	2022 Estimated Employment	2032 Projected Employment	Annual Openings		2023 Average Wage
			Difference	Total	
Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers	13,047	13,552	50	1,059	\$59,020
Firefighters	5,569	5,816	25	446	\$49,380
Correctional Officers and Jailers	5,543	5,031	-51	405	\$40,750
First-Line Supervisors of Police and Detectives	3,502	3,627	12	244	\$82,290
Detectives and Criminal Investigators	1,630	1,711	8	130	\$80,910
First-Line Supervisors of Firefighting and Prevention Workers	1,739	1,816	8	115	\$84,200
First-line Supervisors of Security Workers	997	1,008	1	92	\$62,590
Private Detectives and Investigators	766	817	5	77	\$55,960
First-Line Supervisors of Correctional Officers	1,050	985	-6	75	\$48,560
Gambling Surveillance Officers and Gambling Investigators	358	334	-2	44	\$36,620

Skill requirements for occupations can be divided into *common skills* and *specialized skills*. Common skills are applicable across many different industries and occupations and are also known as “soft” skills. The top common skills for *Protective Service* occupations include *Customer Service* and *Communications*. Specialized skills are more specific to an occupation and are also known as “technical” or “hard” skills. The top specialized skills for *Protective Service* occupations include *Emergency Response* and *Law Enforcement*.

The top qualification for *Protective Service* occupations is a driver’s license, which is useful for a wide range of jobs. Other qualifications are more specific to certain *Protective Service* occupations, such as a *Security Clearance* and *TS/SCI Clearance*.

Top Skills	
Top Common Skills	Top Specialized Skills
Customer Service	Emergency Response
Communications	Law Enforcement
Problem Solving	Access Controls
Professionalism	Site Security
Management	Conflict Resolution

Top Certifications
Valid Driver's License
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification
First Aid Certification
Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance)
Security Clearance

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# MIDDLE-SKILLS CONCLUSION

Missouri's middle-skill occupations play an important part in the economy and are projected to continue to make up a large portion of the workforce through 2032. Middle-skill jobs that typically require one year or less of training can be good entry points for workers into middle-skill fields. For jobs that require more training or education, Missouri's community colleges and apprenticeship programs serve a vital role in educating and training the workforce to meet the demands of these occupations.

The military can also be a pathway to a middle-skill job. Not every military occupation will translate to a civilian job, but many do. Out of 818 civilian occupations, 335 are directly related to an enlisted military occupation. Of those 335 occupations, 160 (47.8%) are middle-skill, and another 136 (40.6%) are high-skill occupations. Typically, enlisted military occupations do not require any experience or education higher than a high school diploma for entry. However, enlisted service members receive technical education and on-the-job training specific to their occupation from the military. Depending on the service branch and the occupation, this technical training can be combined with voluntary off-duty courses to earn an associate degree.

MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS THAT TYPICALLY REQUIRE ONE YEAR  
OR LESS OF TRAINING CAN BE GOOD ENTRY POINTS INTO  
MIDDLE-SKILL FIELDS.



# METHODOLOGY

There is no standard definition of middle-skill occupations. A common description is jobs that are accessible to a person with some training after high school but require less than a bachelor's degree. The methodology used by the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) combines the Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) typical requirements for entry into an occupation with the Employment and Training Administration's O\*NET Job Zone classifications to separate jobs into either low, middle, or high-skill occupations.

BLS primarily assigns occupational skill levels based on typical education, experience, and training requirements. BLS classifies each occupation based on the typical education required to enter an occupation, the work experience in a related job required to enter an occupation, and the typical on-the-job training required to attain the skills needed in an occupation.

The second source used by MERIC for assigning skill levels is the O\*NET Job Zones. The Job Zones indicate the level of vocational preparation needed for a particular occupation. Job Zones are classified on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, with Job Zone 1 needing little or no preparation for entry into an occupation and Job Zone 5 needing extensive preparation for entry into an occupation.

High-skill occupations are defined as having a typical education of a bachelor's degree or higher. Low-skill occupations must have an education requirement of high school or less; no experience necessary; job training typically less than one-month (short-term); and an O\*NET Job Zone of 2 or less.

Once high-skill and low-skill occupations are categorized, all remaining jobs are defined as middle-skill. Most middle-skill occupations require on-the-job training of one month or more, including apprenticeships, and have Job Zones of 2 or 3. A Job Zone of 3 indicates that an occupation needs medium preparation. Middle-skill occupations at the higher end of the category require postsecondary education such as an associate degree and/or some work experience in a related occupation.

This same methodology is also used by MERIC to define Now, Next, and Later occupations. Now, Next, and Later designations are used to quickly identify the general amount of time it would take to acquire the skills and education that would typically be necessary for entry into a particular occupation. Next occupations correspond to middle-skill occupations, while Now and Later occupations correspond to low-skill and high-skill occupations respectively.

# MISSOURI MIDDLE-SKILLS REPORT

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Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) 2022-2032 occupational and industry employment projections data used for employment and openings, and middle-skill concentration of industry and occupation groups. Accessed March 2025.

Middle-skill employment in major occupation groups was based on publishable employment projections data.

LightCast™ for Skills and Certification requirements.

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